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LCPI WORK AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1984

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INTRODUCTION

In 1984, the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation (LCPI) conducted 17 days of on-site fieldwork at Lake Champlain in its ongoing investigations into the lake's supposed "Loch Ness-like animals," which are popularly dubbed "Champ." LCPI's fieldwork at the 109-mile-long lake was an abbreviated schedule compared to its 1982 effort (31 days) and its 1983 program (29 days).

The fieldwork was again oriented towards: (1) a continuation of daylight surface surveillance using cameras and binoculars; (2) further documentation and analysis of Champ sightings; (3) the encouragement of residents and visitors to Lake Champlain to carry cameras for photographic documentation of Champ sightings, and to report Champ sightings to LCPI; and (4) providing assistance to qualified and serious individuals and organizations in Champ-related research/fieldwork. New to our 1984 fieldwork was testing the use and application of a night-sight scope for nocturnal surface surveillance, which was donated to LCPI.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

LCPI fieldwork in 1984 was conducted primarily by M. Pat Meaney and Joseph W. Zarzynski. Assistance during part of the fieldwork was provided by Rod Canham of NyPenn Divers, and ISC member Ted Straiton.

The emphasis of our fieldwork was shoreline and boat surface surveillance using several 35mm cameras with telephoto lenses, a super 8mm movie camera, camera tripods, a Venus Scientific Night Sight, and binoculars.

Lake surface surveillance was conducted at: Kimball Dock Pier, Vermont; Button Bay, Vermont; Bulwagga Bay, New York; and along other shoreline sites. Vessel surveillance was handled from the 13-foot-long Avon inflatable boat used in the past by LCPI.

Two scuba diving sessions were held as part of an underwater reconnaissance survey (June 26: Canham, Meaney, and Zarzynski; September 22: Meaney and Zarzynski).

The dates of the LCPI fieldwork sessions were: April 26, May 27, June 23–29, July 6, July 8, July 18, August 9, September 22–23, and September 29–30. Rod Canham assisted LCPI on June 26–27, and Ted Straiton assisted during a July 8 work session. On August 9, LCPI helped Richard Smith, of Wind & Whalebone Media Productions, during part of his 4-day underwater video work at Lake Champlain.

RESULTS

LCPI field operations in 1984 did not result in any visual sightings of unidentified animals by LCPI members or support personnel. Nor did scuba and sonar sessions note any possible Champ targets. Side scan sonar runs were done at the lake by two sonar teams working with the Champlain Maritime Society on underwater archaeological surveys. Neither team (one led by Jim Kennard, an LCPI associate, and the other conducted by John Fish) reported any sonar anomalies or targets that might be attributed to large unidentified animals.

However, 11 sightings of Champ were cataloged for 1984 by LCPI (Fig. 1), bringing the total number of reported Champ sightings to 235. A brief summary of the 11 sightings for 1984 is outlined below in chronological order:

—May 21, 1984: Anna Gagne; one-quarter mile south of Popasquash Island, near St. Albans, Vermont; 1 p.m.; sunny; a head and neck, but the eyewitness thought it could have been a loon.

—May 23, 1984: Gabriel Gagne, Anna Gagne, and Havaleh Gagne; observed southeast of Popasquash Island; 5 p.m.; rain; head and 3–4 feet of neck; dark gray, dark brown, or black in color; Gabriel Gagne saw the outline of its "fins" just above the surface of the water; plesiosaurus in appearance.

—July 5, 1984: Ronald C. Daly and Matt Cronin; in Shelburne Bay, Vermont; range 250–400 yards; 5:35 p.m.; weather warm; it had just stopped raining; lake surface smooth; head and three humps; color of animal was dark brown or black.

—July 12, 1984: Albert C. Spaulding; from a cottage located 7/10 mile north of the Grand Isle–Cumberland Head ferry, on Grand Isle; range 200–300 yards; 10:30 a.m.; surface calm; black swan-like neck with a bulbous black head . . . not a wildfowl.

—July 18, 1984: Janet Hansen and two friends; Bulwagga Bay, Port Henry, New York; approximately 6 p.m.; while canoeing; range 150 yards; smooth lake surface; "head and long neck in one smooth arch."

—July 21, 1984: Norma J. Oppenlander and her husband; off Shelburne Farms Mansion, Shelburne Point, Vermont; while boating; 1:30 p.m.; very calm lake; brownish green in color; was undulating through the water north to south.

—July 28, 1984: William Togueville; about noon/1 p.m.; from his house in Rouses Point, New York; range 800 meters; two animals visible (six humps on first animal, five humps on second, with the animal's front hump a head); 40–50 feet long; animals black in color.

—July 28, 1984; Michael Shea, Bette Morris, and approximately 60 other

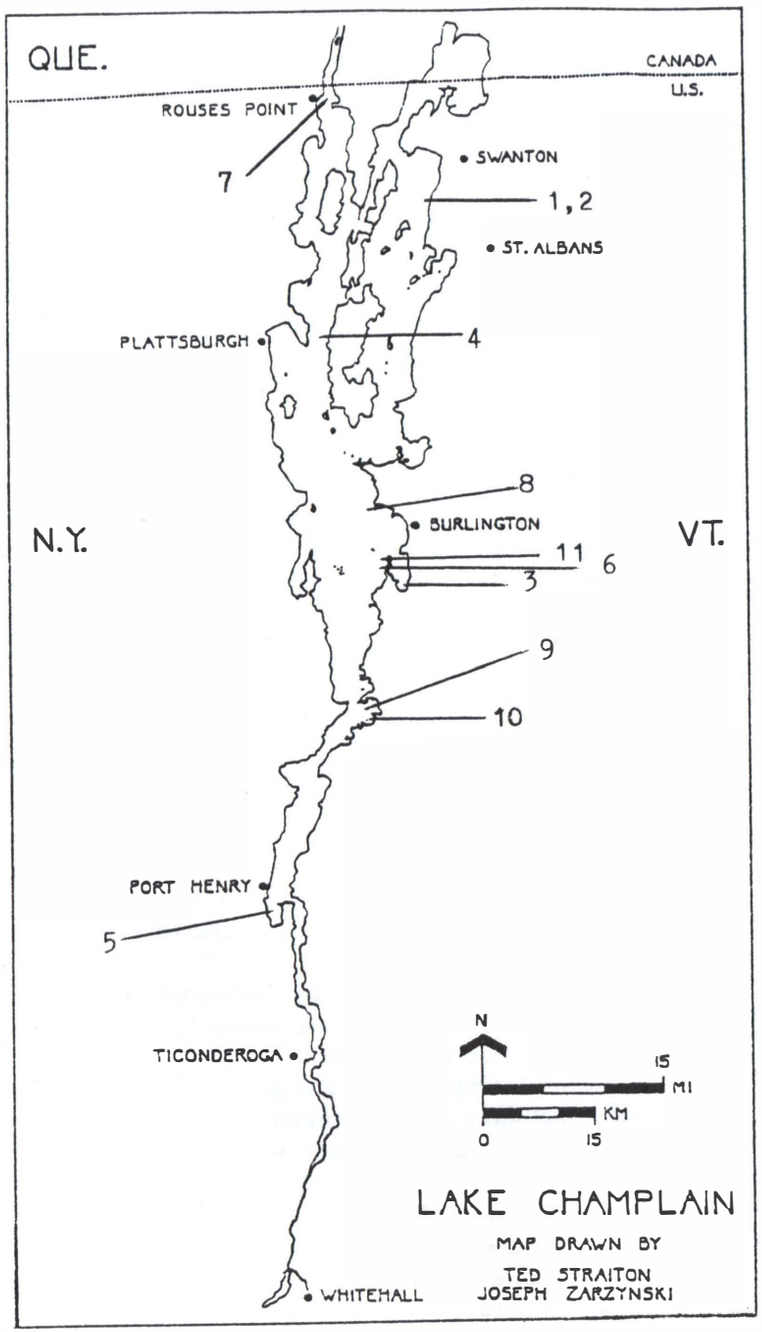

FIG. 1.—Map of Lake Champlain, with numbers indicating the locations of the 11 eyewitness sightings logged by LCPI during 1984.

people; approximately 6–6:30 p.m.; from the vessel *The Spirit of Ethan Allen,* just off Appletree Point, Burlington, Vermont; animal observed twice; range 200–300 feet; 30 feet long; dark, gray, or brown in color; Shea reported three–five humps, each about 15–20 inches tall; Morris wrote that she observed a head and three humps; reportedly a photograph or photographs were taken, but have not been published.

—July 27 or August 3, 1984: Eric Mills; off Ferrisburg, Vermont; in 80–100 feet of water; early afternoon; viewed for 10–15 minutes; 30 feet long.

—August 4, 1984; Eric Mills and his two sisters; from a boat "between Gardiner's Island and the small island near shore at Long Point"; one large hump; hump was "grayish green and the sun glistened from it."

—August 14, 1984; Jim Thurston, Jr., and several others; off Webb Estate, Shelburne Point, Vermont, towards Dunder Rock; from shore; range 100–150 yards; "brownish fish" color; 15 feet long with four humps; viewed through binoculars; was moving at about 5 miles per hour.

As in previous years, many of the sightings involved multiple witnesses, and the observation from *The Spirit of Ethan Allen* involved no fewer than 60 persons, surpassing the 35 witnesses who observed an unknown animal from a YMCA camp in 1983.

FUTURE PLANS

LCPI will continue its long-term field operations at Lake Champlain using similar strategies. In 1985, LCPI will encourage the Vermont Senate to pass the "Champ Resolution," passed already by the Vermont House of Representatives, the New York State Senate, and the New York State Assembly (see Joseph W. Zarzynski, 1984, *Champ: Beyond the Legend,* Bannister Publications, Fort Henry, New York). Like fieldwork at Loch Ness, results at Lake Champlain are piecemeal, but they are important in piecing together this zoological jigsaw puzzle.